

Bible Characters – Joshua (Book of Joshua; first mentioned in Exodus 17:9-13)

The life and events surrounding Joshua are marked by seemingly unsurmountable challenges and hardship. While he is known by Moses and assigned several military tasks (Numbers 13:16; Exodus 17:9-13), he eventually becomes Moses' successor (Deuteronomy 34:9). His assignment now is to lead the Israelites into God's Promised Land. While this is an enormous task, what stands out the most, is the personal relationship between God and Joshua, which is basically the same call of Jesus Christ for us to repent and come to Him (John 7:37-39; Revelation 22:17).

Having witnessed the passing of an entire generation, that died in the wilderness – as a result of their rebellion against God (Hebrews 3:7-19), Joshua now has to leave the past behind, and lead the Israelites across the Jordan river, into the Promised Land, as part of the conquest of Canaan. Here, he shows himself as an obedient servant to God, exemplified in his character (faithful, responsible, loyal and patient).

What stands out as we follow along the first eight chapters (Joshua 1 to 8), is how God works in and through Joshua. Following a successful attack and defeat of Jericho (Joshua 6), there is a striking setback, as the Israelites are defeated at Ai (Joshua 7). What happened here? What is different in these two military campaigns? The Bible reveals, that unlike in his first campaign, Joshua does not seek out God's guidance first, before attacking Ai.

However, realizing his need for God's guidance, Joshua immediately repents and turns to God (Joshua 7:6-15). God then reveals Himself to Joshua, and points out the reason for the battle loss, along with exact instructions how to proceed further. As a result, not only does God give the town of Ai into Israelite hands, successfully defeating them (Joshua 8), but also strengthens Joshua's personal relationship with Him, culminating in a renewal of the Lord's Covenant (Joshua 8:30-35).

To sum up, there is a lot we can learn from Joshua. Not only can we identify with his shortcomings, but also with his disposition of heart bent towards God. As the life and events of Joshua show us, at times, even when we are obedient, God challenges us to wait for His perfect plan, purpose and timing. Importantly, through all of it, He provides for us and helps us, because He knows us better than we know ourselves (Psalm 103:14-16; Matthew 6:26-27; Romans 8:27-37). Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Saviour, invites us to trust in Him and believe in Him (Mark 5:36), since Jesus is the Word (John 1:1-5), and has given us His Word – the Bible. Will we follow Him and His instructions, just as Joshua was told and encouraged to do? -

“Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:8-9 NLT).

For further study:

Gardner P. *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters: The Complete Who's Who in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

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